Civilian use of Bidar and Karwar Airports

1670. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Karnataka has requested to open the Bidar and Karwar Defence airports to civilian use and have offered to provide necessary additional land required for the purpose; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Centre's reaction thereto including the present status of the projects?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) The Government of Karnataka has requested to open the Bidar and Karwar Defence airports to civilian use. Government of India has already conveyed 'in principle' approval to the proposal in respect of Bidar airfield. However, no offer has been made for provision of additional land by the Government of Karnataka for Bidar airfield. For Karwar airport, the State Government has proposed to acquire and transfer additional land. However, at present, there is no runway at Karwar. The Naval air station is planned to be constructed only during subsequent phases of the Project at Karwar.

Purchase of Hawk from England

1671. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a final agreement has been reached between India and England to purchase 'Hawk' fighter aircraft from that country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the number of such aircrafts to be purchased by India;

(c) the main reasons for taking near about two and half decades to reach the agreement; and

(d) whether it is a fact that such fighter aircrafts are out dated in England and most new for India and if so, what shall be the strength and position of Indian Air Force to fight against the enemy?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Contracts were concluded with M/s. BAE Systems of the United Kingdom in March, 2004 for procurement of Hawk Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT) aircraft. Twenty-four aircrafts are to be supplied by BAE Systems in flyaway condition and forty-two aircrafts are to be licensed manufactured in India by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. Four aircrafts have already been delivered by M/s. BAE Systems.

(c) The evaluation of various options for acquisition of AJT aircraft and negotiations with the vendor took considerable time.

(d) The Hawk AJT aircraft is presently used by the Royal Air Force of United Kingdom as well as many other modern air forces. The twin seater Hawk AJT contracted for Indian Air Force is a modern transonic/trainer aircraft and is equipped with an advanced and up to date avionics suite. The aircraft will facilitate smooth transition of young trainee pilots to high performance/technology aircraft in front line fighter squadrons.